



COLLEGE OF NURSES
OF ONTARIO

ORDRE DES INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS DE L'ONTARIO

THE STANDARD OF CARE.

Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship: Maintaining Boundaries

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Overview

At the core of nursing practice is the therapeutic nurse-client relationship.

You establish this relationship by:

- using nursing knowledge and skills
- applying caring attitudes and behaviours.

Review the College's *Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship, Revised 2006* practice document at www.cno.org/pubs.

Standard Statements

- Therapeutic Communication
- Client-Centered Care
- **Maintaining Boundaries**
- Protecting the Client From Abuse

This webcast will help you:

- set and maintain boundaries
- reflect on your relationships with clients.

Components of the Therapeutic Relationship

The five components are:

- **Trust**
- Respect
- Professional Intimacy
- Empathy
- Power

Trust is critical in the nurse-client relationship. If it is breached, it can be hard to re-establish.

Components of the Therapeutic Relationship

- Trust
- Respect
- Professional Intimacy
- Empathy
- Power

Respect is the recognition of the worth of each person.

Professional intimacy is inherent in the care nurses provide.

Components of the Therapeutic Relationship

- Trust
- Respect
- Professional Intimacy
- **Empathy**
- **Power**

Empathy is the understanding of what the health care experience means for the client.

The nurse-client relationship is one of unequal **power**. A misuse of power is considered abuse.

Therapeutic Relationship Process

Development

Introduce yourself to the client by your full name and as an RN, RPN or NP, and explain your role.

Maintenance

Regularly reflect on your relationship with the client and clarify the roles and expectations.

Termination

Meet the client's needs by helping him or her transition from your care.

Standard Statement for Maintaining Boundaries

Nurses are responsible for effectively establishing and maintaining the limits or boundaries in the therapeutic nurse-client relationship.

A boundary crossing is the point at which the relationship changes from professional and therapeutic to unprofessional and personal.

Scenario: Crossing a Boundary

Maintaining a professional relationship

Pierre, a nurse, has been caring for a client, John, for the past three months. On his drive to work, Pierre has a frustrating incident occur on the highway. When he arrives to care for John, Pierre immediately starts complaining about the incident and explaining his frustration with the other driver.

Establishing and Maintaining Boundaries

Establishing

- Self-reflection
- Plan of care
- Confidentiality
- Type of relationship

Maintaining

- Constantly reflect on your practice and care.
- The needs of the client are always the focus of your care.

Scenario: Increased Awareness of Boundaries

Work with the health care team to help maintain an increased awareness and attention to professional boundaries.

Sasha has been providing nursing care to Monique for over a year. Every time Sasha provides care, Monique offers her a juice to drink, which she accepts. While they are drinking, Sasha asks Monique how the last few days have been, how she is feeling, if she is progressing in meeting her goals and if she has any other needs. They also speak of the weather and current events. Sasha uses the time to observe Monique's behaviour.

Scenario: Maintaining Confidentiality

Maintaining boundaries and confidentiality

Ella practises in a small town. She uses social media and is on Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family. Ella is assigned to care for Karen, a client who also works in a local café that Ella frequents. Karen notices that Ella is always texting her friends or is on Facebook when she is in the café. She decides to send Ella a friend request on Facebook.

Scenario: Reflecting and Clarifying the Relationship

Reflection and clarification of the therapeutic relationship

Kristi, a nurse, is providing care for Jim, a client, and his family. They have developed a trusting relationship in a short period of time. Jim's family really likes Kristi and how she cares for him. Kristi is invited to come and use the family pool anytime she wants, and has been invited to Jim's birthday party with his family and friends.

Co-existing Relationships

These occur when a nurse has a relationship with a client prior to providing nursing care. For example, a family member, friend or acquaintance.

If you do provide care:

- understand the effect the dual relationship has on nursing
- clarify the boundaries for the client and yourself
- develop and follow a plan of care
- reflect on maintaining professionalism in the care.

Scenario: Co-existing Relationship

Co-existing relationships and ensuring objectivity and judgment

Joe, an NP, lives and works in a rural practice setting. His neighbour, Martha, has a condition that requires ongoing monitoring. Before Joe sees Martha as a client, he discusses the care and the issues with his colleagues to determine if there would be another NP who would be more appropriate. In this case, because the community is small, the other NP would face the same issues.

Summary

Maintaining boundaries can be challenging.

Review related College practice documents to help your practice.

Develop strategies to guide you, including:

- reflecting on your practice
- having regular discussions with colleagues
- holding team meetings
- using ethical frameworks
- developing your own tools, for example, a list of questions to ask yourself after seeing a client.

Continue Learning

Review the College's *Therapeutic Nurse-Client Relationship, Revised 2006* practice document.

Watch the supporting TNCR learning module.

All resources are available at www.cno.org.

Feedback

Use the ***Evaluate this webcast*** link below to give us your feedback on this webcast.