

Interpersonal Communication Skills for Health-Care Providers

Multiple Choice

1. This is an Interpersonal Communication Skill that requires the health-care provider to be aware of and selectively comment on verbal and nonverbal messages:

- a) Behavioral observation
- b) Focusing
- c) Restating
- d) Empathy

Ans: A

Rationale: Behavioral observation is the best choice because it allows the health-care provider to assess and interpret cues, both verbal and nonverbal, that are taken from the patient during the interaction. The skill of Focusing is used to hone in on particular topics from the interaction with the patient. The skill of Restating allows the provider to repeat key statements back to the patient in order to emphasize important moments of the interaction or to encourage the patient to provide further elaboration. Empathy is a skill to objectively place oneself in another's situation as an outsider.

2. This Interpersonal Communication Skill requires the health-care provider to objectively place oneself in another person's situation:

- a) Active Listening
- b) Reflection
- c) Self-Disclosure
- d) Empathy

Ans: D

Rationale: Empathy is the best choice because it is the act of the health-care provider placing himself or herself in another person's situation, objectively. With the skill of Self-Disclosure, the health-care provider discloses personal information to the patient which will reinforce the therapeutic experience; therefore, this is not the correct answer. The skill of Reflection involves the health-care provider posing the patient's comments or questions back to the patient; therefore, this is not a correct skill to fit this question. The skill of Active Listening allows the provider to demonstrate attentiveness to verbal and nonverbal messages from the interaction with the patient.

3. The Interpersonal Communication Skill of Empathy differs from Sympathy in that with Empathy the health-care provider:
- a) Feels compelled to rescue the patient
 - b) Objectively places himself or herself in another person's situation
 - c) Shares the feelings of another person
 - d) Is unable to perceive or understand to a varying degree what the other person is experiencing

Ans: B

Rationale: Empathy allows the health-care provider the ability to place oneself in another person's situation. The health-care provider is able to perceive and understand, to the degree possible as an outsider, the meaning and relevance of what the other person is experiencing. The other three choices would constitute the act of sympathy and would not support the therapeutic relationship.

4. Which technique is best used to create physical and psychological space?
- a) Empathy
 - b) Boundaries
 - c) Behavioral Observation
 - d) Humor

Ans: B

Rationale: Boundaries allow the health-care provider to create a physical (personal space) and psychological space between the provider and others. The skill of Humor is a verbal or nonverbal communication that is often used to relieve stress. The skill of Empathy allows the health-care provider the ability to place oneself in another person's situation, or what that patient is personally experiencing. Behavioral observation allows the health-care provider to assess and interpret cues, both verbal and nonverbal, that are taken from the patient during the interaction. The use of Behavioral observation can support the use of creating Boundaries but does not actually create the physical and/or psychological space.

5. "It sounds like you're pretty discouraged about your health right now."—This statement is an example of:
- a) Empathy
 - b) Restating
 - c) Sympathy
 - d) Reflection

Ans: D

Rationale: This statement is an example of Reflection, because the health-care provider is reflecting back on the patient's comment. This statement encourages the patient to divulge additional information and demonstrates that the health-care provider is actively listening to the patient during the conversation. The skill of Empathy does not fit this statement, as Empathy

allows the health-care provider the ability to place oneself in another person's situation. Restating involves repeating the essential idea of what the patient has just communicated, word for word or as a summary. It, too, may encourage the patient to divulge additional information and shows that the health-care provider is actively listening to the conversation. Restatement does not fit this statement, because in this statement the health-care provider is posing a comment made by the patient back to the provider. By starting the statement with "it sounds," the health-care provider is reflecting on what he or she has just heard from the patient and is not restating to the patient what was just stated to the provider. Sympathy does not fit this statement, because the health-care provider is not taking on the thoughts and feelings of the patient as if they were his or her own.

6. What is one consideration that should be taken when using the Interpersonal Communication Skill of Self-Disclosure?

- a) It should contribute to the goals of the therapeutic relationship.
- b) The focus of the relationship is off of the patient.
- c) There are no limits to information shared with the patient.
- d) The health-care provider's motivation in using Self-Disclosure is related to the health-care provider's own needs in the interaction.

Ans: A

Rationale: When using the skill of Self-Disclosure, the health-care provider shares personal information, when appropriate, with a patient to support the therapeutic relationship. Important consideration needs to be taken by the health-care provider, prior to disclosure, regarding the motivation behind sharing the personal information and whether or not it contributes to the therapeutic relationship. The focus must remain on the patient and his or her needs.

7. When using the Interpersonal Communication Skill of Humor, the health-care provider must always:

- a) Use it in the appropriate context during the interaction with the client/patient.
- b) Recognize the universality of humor among all cultures.
- c) Prepare a number of humorous things to say before meeting with the client.
- d) Use personal observations of the client to base the humorous interaction on.

Ans: A

Rationale: The skill of Humor is a form of verbal and nonverbal communication and is often used to relieve stress. When used in the appropriate context and with sensitivity to the cultural aspects of care, it can help promote the development of a rapport between the health-care provider and the patient.

8. Which of the following does not support the establishment of a rapport being built with a patient/client?

- a) Introducing yourself to the client
- b) Considering how the client would like to be addressed
- c) Making appropriate small talk
- d) Talking to the client about your schedule for the day

Ans: D

Rationale: All of the choices support the establishment of rapport being built with a patient/client, except for the final choice. The first three choices keep the focus of the interaction on the patient/client and his or her needs. Engaging in dialogue that takes the focus off of the patient/client, as the health-care provider does in the final option, does not support rapport building.

9. When working with an angry client, the use of which of the following is least effective?

- a) Apology
- b) Active Listening
- c) Intolerance
- d) Effective use of silence

Ans: C

Rationale: The skill of Active Listening allows the health-care provider to demonstrate attentiveness to the patient's verbal and nonverbal messages during a moment of an intense, emotional interaction. Effective use of silence makes it possible for the health-care provider to allow moments to be created during the interaction for statements or emotions to diffuse and allows time to process the information that is being presented to the provider by the patient/client. By being able to apologize, the health-care provider is able to offer to the patient an understanding of what was just heard by the health-care provider and provide empathy during an intense situation. Intolerance of the patient's feelings and situation will not support a therapeutic relationship with the patient/client and will hinder building rapport with the patient/client for future interactions.

10. When client's explanations are vague, confusing, or inconsistent, which Interpersonal Communication Skill is the most effective?

- a) Focusing
- b) Reflecting
- c) Clarification
- d) Restating

Ans: C

Rationale: Clarification is the best selection as this skill allows the health-care provider to gather essential information to establish an accurate clinical picture and is best used to assist the health-