

VANDERBILT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Reference for: Therapeutic Communication Techniques Psychiatric Terminology

DEFINITIONS PHRASES TAG
TERMS **TERMINOLOGY** GLOSSARY
DESCRIPTIONS
VERNACULAR NAMES WORDS
LABELS

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COMMUNICATION

THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES:

Accepting

- Conveys positive regard

Attempting to Translate Words into Feelings

- Putting into words the feelings the patient has expressed only indirectly

Encouraging Comparison

- Asking the patient to compare similarities and differences in ideas, experiences, or interpersonal relationships

Exploring

- Delving further into a subject, idea, experience, or relationship

Focusing

- Taking notice of a single idea or even a single word

Formulating a Plan of Action

- Strives to prevent anger or anxiety from escalating to an unmanageable level the next time stressors occur

Giving Broad Openings

- Allows the patient to select the topic

Giving Recognition

- Acknowledging; indicating awareness

Making Observations

- Verbalizing what is observed or perceived

Offering General Leads

- Encourages the patient to continue

Offering Self

- Making oneself available

Placing the Event in Time or Sequence

- Clarifies the relationship of events in time

Presenting Reality

- Clarifying misperceptions that the patient may be expressing

COMMUNICATION

Reflecting

- Questions or feelings are referred back to the patient so that they may be recognized and accepted

Restating

- Lets the patient know whether an expressed statement has been understood or not

Seeking Clarification and Validation

- Striving to explain that which is vague and searching for mutual understanding

Using Silence

- Allows the patient to take control of the discussion, if they so desire

Verbalizing the Implied

- Putting into words what the patient has only implied

Voicing Doubt

- Expressing uncertainty as to the reality of the patient's perceptions

COMMUNICATION

NON-THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES:

Agreeing / Disagreeing

- Implies that the staff member has the right to pass judgment on whether the patient's ideas or opinions are "right" or "wrong"

Belittling Feelings Expressed

- Causes the patient to feel insignificant and unimportant

Defending

- To defend what the patient has criticized implies that they have no right to express ideas, opinions, or feelings

Giving Advice

- Implies that the nurse knows what is best for the patient, and that the patient is incapable of any self-direction

Giving Approval or Disapproval

- Implies that the staff member has the right to pass judgment on the "goodness" or "badness" of the patient's behavior

Giving Reassurance

- May discourage the patient from further expression of feelings if they believe they will only be belittled

Indicating the Existence of an External Source of Power

- Encourages the patient to project blame for their thoughts or behaviors upon others

Interpreting

- Results in the staff member telling the patient the meaning of his or her experience

Introducing an Unrelated Topic

- Causes the staff member to take over the direction of the discussion

Making Stereotyped Comments, Clichés, and Trite Expressions

- These are meaningless in the staff member / patient relationship

COMMUNICATION

Probing

- Pushing for answers to issues the patient does not wish to discuss; causes the patient to feel used and valued only for what is shared with the staff member

Rejecting

- Refusing to consider the patient's ideas or behavior

Requesting an Explanation

- Asking "why?" implies that the patient must defend their behavior or feelings

Using Denial

- Blocks discussion with the patient and avoids helping the patient identify and explore areas of difficulty

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

GENERAL APPEARANCE & MOTOR BEHAVIOR:

- **Akathisia**: extreme motor restlessness
- **Akinesia**: loss or impairment of voluntary muscle movement
- **Disheveled**: untidy or disordered appearance
- **Dystonia**: disordered tonicity of muscles
- **Echopraxia**: imitation of movements of another
- **Oculogyric Crisis**: a form of dystonic reaction to medications that involves spasmodic (usually upward) rolling of the eyeballs that can last for minutes or hours
- **Psychomotor agitation**: feelings of restlessness resulting in purposeless and unintentional movements (including pacing, hand-wringing, etc.)
- **Psychomotor retardation**: slowed movements
- **Automatisms**: the performance of actions without conscious thought or intention
- **Stereotypy**: persistent repetition of an act for no obvious purpose
- **Tardive Dyskinesia**: a disorder of movement that affects a person's ability to perform voluntary muscular movements; continuous and repetitive movements of the mouth, tongue, jaw, arms, legs, fingers, and/or toes; can also include facial grimacing, lip smacking, puffing of the cheeks, or swaying motions of the trunk or hips. Often a side effect of neuroleptic medications that is permanent and untreatable.
- **Unkempt**: disheveled and ungroomed / lack of hygiene

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

SPEECH:

- **Alogia**: an impoverishment in thinking that is inferred from observing speech and language behavior (poverty of speech and/or poverty of content)
- **Aphasia**: an impairment in the understanding or transmission of ideas by language in any of its forms (reading, writing, speaking) that is due to injury or disease of the brain centers involved in language
- **Clang Associations**: verbal linking of words based on sound rather than meaning—involves compulsive rhyming or alliteration without connection between words
- **Echolalia**: parrot-like repetition of speech of another
- **Flight of ideas**: a nearly continuous flow of accelerated speech with abrupt changes from topic to topic that are usually based on understandable associations, distracting stimuli, or plays on words. When severe, speech may be disorganized and incoherent
- **Incoherence**: unable to think or express one's thought in an understandable manner
- **Looseness of Association (Loose Associations)**: pattern of speech where ideas verbalized have little or no connection—frame of reference often changes from one sentence to the next
- **Mutism**: inability to speak
- **Neologisms**: a made-up or new word that has no meaning except to the person stating the word
- **Poverty of Speech**: marked reduction of the amount of spontaneous speech
- **Pressured Speech**: speech that is rapid and frenzied
- **Tangential Speech**: pattern of speech in which the train of thought of the person wanders and never returns to the initial topic of conversation
- **Thought Blocking**: a person's speech is suddenly interrupted by silence that may last a few seconds or longer—sudden inability to finish a thought
- **Word Salad**: a meaningless mixture of seemingly random words and phrases

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

THOUGHT CONTENT:

- **Compulsions**: an irresistible impulse to perform an action or ritual
- **Delusions**: fixed and false belief that is resistant to reason or confrontation with actual fact
- **Hallucinations**: perception of visual (sight), auditory (hearing), tactile (touch), olfactory (smell), or gustatory (taste) experience without an external stimulus (does not really exist)
- **Ideas of Reference**: the feeling that events and causal incidents have particular meaning specific to the individual
- **Magical Thinking**: nonscientific and sometimes irrational beliefs, investing special powers and forces in things seen as symbols or believing that one's thoughts, words, or actions can achieve specific physical effects not scientifically possible
- **Obsessions**: compulsive preoccupation with a fixed idea or unwanted feeling or emotion that is accompanied by symptoms of anxiety
- **Paranoia**: a mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance, typically elaborated into an organized system
- **Religiosity**: intense and excessive preoccupation with religion

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

MOOD:

- **Mood**: pervasive and enduring emotional state. Refers to feelings. Use your assessment of the patient's mood as well as verbatim responses during assessments. The following words are possible descriptors of mood:
 - Angry
 - Anxious
 - Apathetic
 - Depressed, Dysthymic
 - Euthymic (normal / typical)
 - Happy
 - Labile
 - Sad

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

AFFECT:

- **Affect**: outward expression of internal emotional state. The following descriptors are commonly used to describe someone's affect:
 - Bizarre: facial expression is odd or strange
 - Blunted: reduction or limitation in the intensity of responses
 - Broad: expresses a wide range of emotions
 - Congruent: facial expressions in agreement with verbalizations or appropriate to context of situation
 - Dysthymic: appears sad or blue
 - Euthymic: "normal" range of expression / neither happy or sad expression
 - Flat: absence or near absence of facial expressions
 - Incongruent: facial expressions in conflict with verbalizations or seem inappropriate to context of situation
 - Restricted: lack of emotional range / restricted expression of emotions

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

DELUSIONS:

- **Erotomaniac**: that someone is in love with him/her
- **Jealous**: that their partner is unfaithful or the loved one cares for someone else more
- **Nihilistic**: that the world, the self, others, etc. do not exist
- **Of Control or Influence**: others have control or are influencing what they do (ex: dentist put a filling in a tooth that is controlling what they say or do)
- **Of Grandeur**: that they are of special importance, special identity (ex: they are Jesus)
- **Of Reference**: that events in the environment refer to him/her (ex: message from the TV)
- **Paranoid**: suspicious of others
- **Persecutory**: believe they are being conspired against or mistreated in some way (ex: harassed, cheated, drugged, poisoned)
- **Religiosity**: obsession with religion
- **Somatic Type**: false ideas about their body and /or its functioning
- **Thought Broadcasting**: thoughts can be heard by others
- **Thought Insertion**: others are inserting thoughts into their minds

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

PHOBIAS:

- **Phobia**: an irrational and excessive fear of something that causes avoidance, anxiety, and even panic. According to the DSM, phobias typically fall within 5 general categories:
 - **Fears related to animals**
 - *Alektorophobia*: fear of chickens
 - *Arachnophobia*: fear of spiders
 - *Cynophobia*: fear of dogs
 - *Elurophobia*: fear of cats
 - *Herpetophobia*: fear of reptiles
 - *Ophidiophobia*: fear of snakes
 - *Zoophobia*: fear of animals
 - **Fears related to the natural environment**
 - *Acrophobia*: fear of heights
 - *Agoraphobia*: fear of wide open spaces
 - *Anthophobia*: fear of flowers
 - *Astraphobia*: fear of thunder and lightning
 - *Barophobia*: fear of gravity
 - *Claustrophobia*: fear of confined or crowded spaces
 - *Hydrophobia*: fear of water
 - *Nyctophobia*: fear of the dark
 - **Fears related to blood, injury, or medical issues**
 - *Aichmophobia*: fear of needles or pointed objects
 - *Algophobia*: fear of pain
 - *Hemophobia*: fear of blood
 - *Iatrophobia*: fear of doctors
 - *Mysophobia*: fear of dirt and germs
 - *Nosocomophobia*: fear of hospitals

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

- **Fears related to specific situations**
 - *Aerophobia*: fear of flying
 - *Amazophobia*: fear of riding in a car
 - *Catagelophobia*: fear of being ridiculed
 - *Gamophobia*: fear of marriage
 - *Glossophobia*: fear of speaking in public
 - *Mageirocophobia*: fear of cooking
- **Other fears**
 - *Arithmophobia*: fear of numbers
 - *Autophobia*: fear of being alone
 - *Bathmophobia*: fear of stairs or steep slopes
 - *Coulrophobia*: fear of clowns
 - *Phobophobia*: fear of phobias
 - *Pogonophobia*: fear of beards

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

OTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF BEHAVIOR / SYMPTOMS:

- **Anhedonia**: lack of ability to feel pleasure from activities or experiences usually found to be enjoyable
- **Anergia**: lethargy and/or abnormal lack of energy
- **Apathy**: lack of interest or concern in life activities; state of indifference or absence of emotion or excitement
- **Avolition**: an inability to initiate and persist in goal-directed activities. When severe enough to be considered pathological, avolition is pervasive and prevents the person from completing many different types of activities
- **Catatonia**: abnormality of movement and behavior that may involve stupor, repetitive or purposeless activity, negativism, or rigidity or extreme flexibility of the limbs
- **Codependence**: emotional and behavioral condition that affects a person's ability to have healthy relationships. Also known as "relationship addiction" because people with codependency often form and maintain relationships that are one-sided, emotionally destructive, and/or abusive. Common in family members of addicted persons.
- **Confabulation**: spontaneous and unintentional production of false memories
- **Depersonalization**: feeling detached from, as if one is an outside observer, of one's body or mental processes
- **Derealization**: alteration in perception of world or surroundings; seems unreal
- **Flashback**: re-experiencing a traumatic event to the extent that the person feels or acts as if the traumatic event is occurring all over again. The person may lose all awareness of his or her surroundings
- **Fugue (Dissociative Fugue)**: type of dissociative state in which the person suddenly (without planning) travels far from home or work and has amnesia about past life and may even take on a new identity or be confused about their identity

PSYCHIATRIC TERMINOLOGY

- **Hypomania**: mild form of mania marked by elevated or irritable mood, racing thoughts, and hyperactivity
- **Hyperacusis**: painful sensitivity to sounds
- **Hypersomnia**: excessive sleep
- **Passive-Aggressive Behavior**: behavior that is indirectly resistant to the demands of others and expresses hostility, anger, or resentment through passive means rather than being directly aggressive
- **Splitting (All or Nothing Thinking)**: a common defense mechanism that involves the division of beliefs, actions, objects, or persons into good or bad by focusing selectively on their positive or negative attributes. The compartmentalization of opposites leaves the person with a distinctly distorted picture of reality and a restricted range of thoughts and emotions. It also affects the ability to attract and maintain relationships, because it can easily flip, with friends and lovers being thought of as personified virtue at one time and then as personified vice at another (and back and forth).
- **Sundowning**: a condition where elderly or cognitively impaired people become increasingly confused at the end of the day
- **Synesthesia**: a mixing of the senses; stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway (ex: In color synesthesia, letters or numbers are perceived as inherently colored)