



Meeting the NMC Standards and Essential Skills Clusters

Transforming Nursing Practice

Engagement and Therapeutic Communication in Mental Health Nursing

Sandra Walker

Series editors:
Shirley Bach and Mooi Standing



Engagement and Therapeutic Communication in Mental Health Nursing

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Foreword

One thing that can never be overlooked in mental healthcare is the complexity of human beings. Unfailingly individual, we all operate from a comprehensive array of cultural backgrounds and beliefs; various levels of knowledge and understanding; differing likes and dislikes; diverse life experiences and multiple behaviours. Learning to navigate these differences and managing to connect with others despite them, is one of the hardest tasks ahead of us in our quest for high quality care for those in mental distress. Research has consistently shown that it is the human relationships we develop that have the biggest impact on recovery in mental healthcare; successful engagement and therapeutic communication are essential in order to help people find their way out of the maze of problems that may have beset them.

This book offers many practical suggestions as to how to ensure we successfully engage with those in our care, underpinned by a broad base of theory and evidence. The principles of person-centred recovery, validation, respect and dignity are themes that are interwoven throughout the chapters. The book provides practical exercises that will help the reader to develop a stronger sense of self both as a person and a professional while at the same time learning to put themselves in the shoes of the person they are caring for and always remembering that it is their values, not ours, that must direct our action.

There are two outstanding themes, however, that bear further consideration as you embark on reading this text. The *importance of self-awareness* is a recurring theme throughout the chapters. It is essential that we are aware of our own cultural background, our own values, beliefs and attitudes, our non-verbal body language, our limitations and when we need to ask for help. The importance of supervision and reflective practice support this and are repeatedly highlighted as hallmarks of best practice. Additionally, *curiosity* is another, often reoccurring, theme. It is the way to ensure we are not hijacked by our own standpoint. To ask gentle probing questions of the position of the person in distress, to maintain a respectful curiosity in the face of behaviour we find difficult to understand, is key in helping us to work collaboratively with people to help them recover. The importance of these two themes cannot be underestimated.

If you are a student nurse, a newly qualified nurse or even a nurse of some years' standing looking for tips to update your portfolio of skills, this book will stand you in good stead for practice. It can be read as a whole but can also be dipped into section by section as you come across situations in practice, perhaps, that warrant further exploration of that particular subject. Engaging with this book will help you to become a more effective practitioner of the art of mental health nursing, enhancing your ability to connect with people of diverse backgrounds and needs.

Sandra Walker

April 2014

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About the authors

Peter Bullard is the Accredited Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) Quality Lead for the Isle of Wight Primary Care Mental Health service. He works with individuals suffering from anxiety and depression, and delivers low-intensity CBT interventions through different modalities. He graduated from Southampton University in 2010 and has worked on the course as a clinical educator since that year. He has an MSc in Transcultural Mental Health and Psychological Therapies. Before working in mental health services he had a background in physical fitness, completing his degree in Health and Fitness management, and working as an instructor and trainer in many different healthcare settings. He strongly believes in the value of combining therapeutic approaches with the application of improving well-being for individuals experiencing mental health problems.

Simon Grist is a Lecturer in Mental Health and Programme Lead for the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner programme at the University of Southampton. A qualified mental health nurse and CBT therapist, prior to working at the university he was a CMHT manager, working extensively in crisis and home treatment teams and in substance misuse services.

Yvonne Middlewick has been a mental health lecturer within the University of Southampton for six years. A dual registered nurse, RGN and RMN, she has had a varied career working with people of different ages. She started her career in a gynaecology and breast surgery unit, where she cared for people with complex psychological as well as physiological needs, rekindling her interest in mental health. As a result, she completed a post-qualifying mental health course at Bournemouth University, and later worked with older adults in a mental health setting before returning to an adult nursing environment to work with older people. Experience from both settings has helped Yvonne to holistically care for older people with complex needs.

Dorothy Neal is a pseudonym used, at her request, to protect the identity of the service user who co-wrote her chapter. She has a long history of mental health problems as well as a full and active family life plus a love of dancing.

Julia Pelle is a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing at Kingston University and St George's University London. She currently teaches on culture, ethnicity and diversity in mental health and social care to pre- and post-registration students. Julia maintains a research interest in family carers from Black and Ethnic Minority communities who care for relatives with an enduring mental health problem. She also worked as a Senior Nurse in an acute inpatient mental health setting before moving into health and social care education.

Wendy Turton (RMN, MSc, BABCP Accred. Cognitive Therapist) is currently a Lecturer in Mental Health within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Southampton and the Senior Psychological Therapist with a Mental Health Recovery Team in Portsmouth. Wendy trained in Leicestershire on an integrated Mental Health and Learning Disability nursing programme, choosing to focus her career on mental health, and in recent years on severe and enduring mental health problems, in particular the experience of psychosis. In 2004 Wendy set up the Psychosocial Interventions for Psychosis Service (PSIPS) within South East Hampshire, which she led for nine years. During this time Wendy was involved in clinical research, exploring the efficacy of *Person-based Cognitive Therapy for Distressing Psychosis* (Chadwick, 2006) and co-authored two award-winning short books on the experience of living with psychosis with MH service users; her ongoing research continues to focus on the lived experience of psychosis. Wendy also works with the CBT Programme Team at the University of Southampton.

Sandra Walker is a Senior Teaching Fellow in Mental Health at Southampton University, where she is also a doctorate student researching the patient experience of the mental health assessment in the Emergency Department. She is a Qualified Mental Health Nurse with a wide range of clinical experience spanning more than 20 years. In addition to her university work, she is a professional musician and does voluntary work for various mental health organisations, including being the coordinator for the Hampshire Human Library – an international initiative aimed at reducing stigma through interaction and education of the public. She is the creative director of The Sanity Company, which publishes books aimed at helping children and young people develop good mental health and problem-solving skills.

Janine Ward is an accredited Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) and Mental Health Practitioner by background and has worked within forensic mental health, learning difficulties, community mental health and substance abuse teams. Janine currently leads the Southampton Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Low Intensity and Assessment Team and provides some clinical leadership across her employing Trust. She is seconded as a PWP educator at the University of Southampton and has worked within the Health Sciences Faculty for the last three years. Janine is currently studying for her PhD at Southampton.

Andy Williams joined the Royal Navy at 18 and served for 22 years, during which time he trained as a Registered General Nurse and later a Registered Mental Nurse. Andy is a Master of Arts in Mental Health and a Bachelor of Nursing with Education in order to register for the education of nurses. On leaving the service, Andy secured a senior lecturer post with the MOD before accepting a post at Southampton University.

Andy's teaching interests are in interpersonal and communication skills, bereavement and loss, post-traumatic stress disorder, spirituality, adult mental health, particularly around anxiety and depression, suicide and self-harm. He is involved in nurse education in pre- and post-qualifying programmes and IAPT education.

Introduction

About this book

This book is written primarily for student nurses currently undertaking their qualifications. It will also be useful for junior nurses who are just beginning their careers and would be a useful refresher for anyone who cares for people in mental distress on a regular basis.

Why *Engagement and Therapeutic Communication*?

Building a good rapport with service users is essential to good mental healthcare. This book explores simple techniques to facilitate this and encourages readers to reflect on their own communication styles and become more aware of how their communications affect others. There is a lot of theoretical material available on communication and engagement; however, this book aims to provide a more active and engaging experience and case studies that will allow the reader to practise some of the techniques shared in the context of recovery, which is a core underpinning of this book. The NMC *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education* (2010a) demand that, for mental health nurses, ‘therapeutic use of self’ is essential in providing high-quality care (Competencies for entry to the register: Mental health nursing, Domain 2: Communication and interpersonal skills, Field standard for competence). The skills required to do this are challenging, especially as the environment of healthcare is becoming increasingly pressured.

This book introduces the basic elements of communication in mental health nursing and provides readers with material to help them develop excellent engagement skills and begin to discover what ‘therapeutic use of self’ means to them. The NMC *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education* (2010a), to which all programmes must comply by 2014, require that students must have acquired by the end of their training ‘communication and interpersonal skills’ as a core element in their nursing practice. The new standards contain more detailed requirements for communication and interpersonal skills than the previous standards, and there are specific requirements for mental health nurses. This book covers content outlined in these requirements for mental health nurses specifically, and is an excellent tool in assisting the development of these skills.

Book structure

In Chapter 1 we are introduced to communication in mental health, including communication styles and what advanced communication is. It starts out to draw a comparison that allows the reader to begin to distinguish between straightforward communication and therapeutic

communication. The elements of therapeutic communication are explored along with considerations as to how therapeutic communications can be improved by developing self-awareness through supervision. There is a first look at how best to communicate with people in distress, those who have experienced abuse or traumatic events and people in psychotic states.

Chapter 2 looks at the issue of engagement. The main concepts of therapeutic engagement are described and why good engagement skills are a key element of the role of the mental health nurse. This chapter articulates the interpersonal dynamics of the process of engagement and the importance of increased self-awareness when initiating therapeutic relationships with service users. The importance of a person-centred approach to care is examined along with how this underpins effective engagement skills. This allows for application of a developed understanding of therapeutic engagement in your practice.

In Chapter 3, building rapport, including therapeutic use of self, is the focus. The importance of the therapeutic alliance is stressed in helping service users fully understand their techniques, rationales and values in helping them reach their goals. The need for an intervention to be adaptable to the service user's needs without sacrificing professional standards is an issue considered here, as well as the importance of collaboration with the service user having a say in all decisions. Efforts to enhance the relationship should be considered throughout the intervention or risk losing the power to make change. It is emphasised that the mental health nurse should try to understand the service user from his or her unique perspective, even if the nurse feels the service user needs to be challenged. As part of this the importance of avoiding criticism, blame and rejection and instead maintaining a curious stance are emphasised.

Chapter 4 looks at the practical issue of questioning techniques, including downward arrowing or funnelling. Here a range of questioning styles to communicate with service users are considered in order to reflect, paraphrase, clarify and summarise in order to allow the reader to learn ways to gather appropriate and relevant information in a timely manner.

What helps when communication becomes difficult is the focus of Chapter 5, including cognitive impairment and psychosis. There is an exploration of the factors that can affect communication and make it more difficult in mental health nursing. We begin to recognise the effects that being cognitively impaired can have on communication. This chapter also encourages reflection on your own assumptions, values and beliefs, and their impact on how you communicate with others. Some strategies are described that may help to break down some of the barriers to communication.

Chapter 6 considers issues related to cross-cultural communication. It defines and identifies barriers to cross-cultural communication in mental healthcare. This chapter starts with a general introduction to cross-cultural communication in mental healthcare, followed by a review of the barrier to the delivery of cross-cultural communication. An overview of the effective communication strategies used in mental health practice is discussed and the significant role of the mental health nurse in implementing these strategies underpins the wider debate around cross-cultural communication.

Chapter 7 continues this cross-cultural journey but from the perspective of the carer as partner in care. This chapter explores how carers, usually family members or friends, become important

in supporting the delivery of health and social care to different client groups. Some time is spent reviewing the meaning of ‘carer’, and how carers work in partnership with mental health nurses is the theme throughout the chapter. A definition of ‘partnership’ is provided in the context of mental health and social care practice. The partnership approach to involving carers in care for others requires that the nurse assesses the health and social care needs of carers, who may experience the burden of caring over time as well as trying to adjust to their roles as carers. Ensuring that there are equal opportunities to receive support from health and social care services indicates that nurses need to focus on carer groups that may not be reached due to stigma, social exclusion and discrimination, for example young carers, carers who are economically disadvantaged, carers from black and ethnic minority communities, and carers from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities.

In the last chapter, the service user perspective is the focus of attention – why it’s important to get it right! This chapter is slightly unusual in format in that it is presented primarily as one case study, comprising an interview carried out with a service user, following several years of care in a variety of clinical settings. Into this interview are interspersed activities, reflections and alternative case studies to help you to think more broadly around the issues raised within the interview itself, including how the clinicians’ behaviour impacts on care delivery, and the ethical issues arising from a given clinical situation. It also encourages reflection on your own values and judgements in interacting with service users in day-to-day care in the hope that, by the end of the chapter and indeed this book, you will have an increased understanding of the importance of validation and maintaining dignity in clinical care.

Requirements for the NMC *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education* and the Essential Skills Clusters

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has established standards of competence to be met by applicants to different parts of the register, and these are the standards it considers necessary for safe and effective practice. In addition to the competencies, the NMC has set out specific skills that nursing students must be able to perform at various points of an education programme. These are known as Essential Skills Clusters (ESCs). This book is structured so that it will help you to understand and meet the competencies and ESCs required for entry to the NMC register. The relevant competencies and ESCs are presented at the start of each chapter so that you can clearly see which ones the chapter addresses. There are *generic standards* that all nursing students irrespective of their field must achieve, and *field-specific standards* relating to each field of nursing, that is, mental health, children’s, learning disability and adult nursing. Most chapters have generic standards, and occasionally field-specific standards are listed.

This book includes the latest standards for 2010 onwards, taken from *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education* (NMC, 2010a).

Learning features

Throughout the book you will find activities in the text that will help you to make sense of, and learn about, the material being presented by the authors.

Some activities ask you to reflect on aspects of practice, or your experience of it, or the people or situations you encounter. *Reflection* is an essential skill in nursing, and it helps you to understand the world around you and often to identify how things might be improved. Other activities will help you develop key skills such as your ability to *think critically* about a topic in order to challenge received wisdom, or your ability to *research a topic and find appropriate information and evidence*, and to be able to make decisions using that evidence in situations that are often difficult and time-pressured. Finally, communication and working as part of a team are core to all nursing practice, and some activities will ask you to think about your *communication skills* to help develop these skills.

All the activities require you to take a break from reading the text, think through the issues presented and carry out some independent study, possibly using the internet. Where appropriate, there are sample answers presented at the end of each chapter, and these will help you to understand more fully your own reflections and independent study. Remember, academic study will always require independent work; attending lectures will never be enough to be successful on your programme, and these activities will help to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the issues under scrutiny and give you practice at working on your own.

You might want to think about completing these activities as part of your personal development plan (PDP) or portfolio. After completing the activity, write it up in your PDP or portfolio in a section devoted to that particular skill, then look back over time to see how far you have developed. You can also do more of the activities for a key skill that you have identified a weakness in, which will help build your skill and confidence in this area.

It is the aim of this book to use an interactive style with realistic scenarios, to be a book that explains how, as well as why, while taking account of the complexity of modern healthcare, thereby providing the reader with practical tools to add to his or her toolbox of communication skills.

Chapter 1

Therapeutic communication in mental health nursing

Andy Williams

NMC Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education

This chapter will address the following competencies:

Domain 2: Communication and interpersonal skills

Mental health nurses must practise in a way that focuses on the therapeutic use of self. They must draw on a range of methods of engaging with people of all ages experiencing mental health problems, and those important to them, to develop and maintain therapeutic relationships. They must work alongside people, using a range of interpersonal approaches and skills to help them explore and make sense of their experiences in a way that promotes recovery.

1. All nurses must build partnerships and therapeutic relationships through safe, effective and non-discriminatory communication. They must take account of individual differences, capabilities and needs.
- 1.1 **Mental health nurses** must use skills of relationship-building and communication to engage with and support people distressed by hearing voices, experiencing distressing thoughts or experiencing other perceptual problems.
4. All nurses must recognise when people are anxious or in distress and respond effectively, using therapeutic principles, to promote their wellbeing, manage personal safety and resolve conflict. They must use effective communication strategies and negotiation techniques to achieve best outcomes, respecting the dignity and human rights of all concerned. They must know when to consult a third party and how to make referrals for advocacy, mediation or arbitration.
- 4.1 **Mental health nurses** must be sensitive to, and take account of, the impact of abuse and trauma on people's wellbeing and the development of mental health problems. They must use interpersonal skills and make interventions that help people disclose and discuss their experiences as part of their recovery.
5. All nurses must use therapeutic principles to engage, maintain and, where appropriate, disengage from professional caring relationships, and must always respect professional boundaries.
- 5.1 **Mental health nurses** must use their personal qualities, experiences and interpersonal skills to develop and maintain therapeutic, recovery-focused relationships with people and therapeutic groups. They must be aware of their own mental health, and

continued . . .

know when to share aspects of their own life to inspire hope while maintaining professional boundaries.

Domain 3: Nursing practice and decision-making

- 7.1 **Mental health nurses** must provide support and therapeutic interventions for people experiencing critical and acute mental health problems. They must recognise the health and social factors that can contribute to crisis and relapse and use skills in early intervention, crisis resolution and relapse management in a way that ensures safety and security and promotes recovery.
8. All nurses must provide educational support, facilitation skills and therapeutic nursing interventions to optimise health and wellbeing. They must promote self-care and management whenever possible, helping people to make choices about their healthcare needs, involving families and carers where appropriate, to maximise their ability to care for themselves.

NMC Essential Skills Clusters

This chapter will address the following ESCs:

Cluster: Care, compassion and communication

1. As partners in the care process, people can trust a newly registered graduate nurse to provide collaborative care based on the highest standards, knowledge and competence.

By the first progression point:

4. Shows respect for others.
5. Is able to engage with people and build caring professional relationships.

By the second progression point:

6. Forms appropriate and constructive professional relationships with families and their carers.

By entry to the register:

11. Acts as a role model in developing trusting relationships, within professional boundaries.
12. Recognises and acts to overcome barriers in developing effective relationships with service users and carers.
13. People can trust the newly registered graduate nurse to respect them as individuals and strive to help them preserve their dignity at all times.

By the first progression point:

3. Uses ways to maximise communication where hearing, vision or speech is compromised.