Caring Communication at End of Life

Post Clinical Conference, 1 hour
4th Floor Conference Room 4-5pm
See Class Syllabus for specific information and faculty contacts.

Pre-Class Activities and & Required Readings:

Reading:
Craven & Hirnle, Ch. 46-Loss & Grieving


Activity:
- Pre-Test for assessment of knowledge about communication during death and dying transitions. (See attached) – Complete and email to faculty by Friday *prior* to class.
- Please complete the following self assessment and bring to class:
  On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying, Self-Assessment of Your Beliefs About Death and Dying
  [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourownterms/articles/quiz.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourownterms/articles/quiz.html)

Overview/Purpose of Class: Nurses frequently work with patients and families who are experiencing death and loss and therefore have many opportunities to provide care for and communicate with grieving persons. This class is aimed at providing students the tools and practice to engage in conversations with patients and families facing end of life transitions.

Learning Theory, Educational Philosophy & Instructional Design: Activities and learning in this class will be based in adult learning and humanistic philosophy and social constructivism theory. Learners will begin by identifying and analyzing their own feelings, attitudes and beliefs surrounding death and dying and then will expand and formulate new knowledge by applying new nursing and communication skills (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). The environment for this class will be rooted in the humanistic philosophy with the instructor acting as a facilitator for learning. An environment of safety and respect will be fostered by having students start their activities and explore their own feelings and experiences before class,
individually. By supporting and acknowledging the feelings and values the students bring with them related to the topic of death and dying, the development of a humanistic perspective toward others (patients and families) will be encouraged (Billings & Halstead, 2005). Instructional design for this class is based on the ASSURE model. Analyze learners, state objectives, select instructional methods, media and materials, utilize media and materials, require learner participation, and evaluate and revise (Instructional Media and Technologies for Learning, 1999).

**Objectives & Activities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activity &amp; Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Eval strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will analyze their own feelings, attitudes, expectations, values, surrounding death and dying, including cultural and spiritual influences.</td>
<td>Completion of the self-assessment pre-class activity.</td>
<td>Pre-Class</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
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<td>Students will collaboratively create patient care goals for patients and families experiencing end of life transitions.</td>
<td>As a large group, students will view 2 video vignettes depicting a family at the bedside of a dying patient. One scenario will feature a patient who is awake and interactive; the other scenario will focus on a family and patient who are recent immigrants from a foreign country. Students will use data from the videos to develop appropriate end of life communications and care for the families involved. As a large group, using the data gathered in the previous activity, students will discuss development of goals for the patient and families end of life experience, Students will divide into groups of 2 for role play, one student acting as the nurse, the other as the family member or patient. They will be given a brief scenario and will practice therapeutic communication using the techniques outlined in the reading material (reflection, reminiscing, active listening and empathy). They will then switch roles. Discussion will follow to analyze how students felt in each role and how this might affect their practice.</td>
<td>5 min per video 10 min 10 min discussion 10 min Discussion 20 min role play 10 min discussion</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Rubric</td>
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Rationale for Objectives and Learning Goals: The American Association of Colleges of Nursing outlines self awareness of one’s own beliefs surrounding death as a core competency which every undergraduate nurse should achieve (2004). According to Craven & Hrnle (1992) nurses must have a comfortable sense of self and an awareness of their own personality, values, culture and communication style before they can communicate therapeutically. By evaluating their own feelings toward loss, students can begin to understand the needs of and empathize with patients and families experiencing death and dying (McGuigan & Gilbert, 2009). By completing a personal assessment/reflective activity about their own feelings and attitudes surrounding a topic, students can be encouraged to learn from their previous experiences, can practice transfer of knowledge from one situation to another, and faculty can facilitate lifelong learning (Billings & Halstead, 2005).

In his article Contradictions at the end of life (2009), Sir George Castledine outlines essential components of assessment when dealing with patients and families at the end of life to include degree of pain and suffering, adaptation and functionality abilities, experiences with illness, suffering and death, personal views about the dying journey, and presence and availability of a support network. He also stresses the importance of the nurse getting to know the patient and family as intimately as possible by observing their behaviors and exploring their experiences with death. By using interactive sessions to discuss assessment findings and goal planning students are encouraged to use problem-solving skills and enhance their inquiry skills (McGuigan & Gilbert, 2009).

Johnson’s self regulatory theory suggests that a person’s information and experience with an event allows them to develop a mental representation or schema of the event. This schema, when combined with concrete and objective information about what to expect during the event,
facilitates coping by reducing ambiguity and uncertainty (Kirchhoff, Palzkill, Kowalkowski, Mork & Gretarsdottir, 2008). The AACN Recommended Competencies for End of Life Nursing Care (2004) includes “demonstrate respect for the patient’s views and wishes during end of life care” as a core competency for undergraduate nurses. This includes developing and awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and its effect on situations surrounding death and dying. By learning to pick up cues and recognize cultural variations in coping, students can better understand and meet the needs of culturally diverse patients and families (McGuigan & Gilbert, 2009).

Students will use discussion throughout this class to meld the content material with their own personal philosophy about death and dying. Brookfield emphasizes using discussion to show respect to students’ by dignifying their experiences and affirm the importance of those lived experiences and explore shared elements (2006). Following the role play activity discussion is facilitated encouraging students to explore their feelings and coping mechanisms used during difficult conversations.

**Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated using two types of assessment tools. First, they will be evaluated on their participation in the class including completion of the pre-assessment, discussion contribution and participation in the role play activity using the posted rubric. Next, students will participate in an online discussion forum after class. The students will be expected to post their thoughts on the most important thing they learned about communication during a dying experience, and also the “muddiest point,” and then to follow up with responses to at least 2 other students postings. Students will also be asked to complete a course evaluation to assess how the class offering met the objectives and the needs of the learners. See pre-test, participation rubric, post test and course evaluation which follow.
Pre-Test
Assessment of Knowledge about Communication during Death and Dying Transitions
Circle the appropriate answer(s)
Email completed test to faculty no later than the Friday before Monday’s class

1) __________________ affects the normal grieving process.
   1. The characteristics of the loss
   2. Personal resources and stressors
   3. Socio-cultural resources and stressors
   4. All of the above

2) The outcome of a loss experience is not predetermined, but is determined and influences by the balance of stressors and resources present during the process.
   True    False

3) Culturally diverse manifestations of grief during the dying process might include____________________
   1. Chanting and load verbalizations
   2. The preparation and eating if certain foods
   3. Religious incantations, prayers and visits from church leaders
   4. Certain body preparations and care processes
   5. All of the above

4) Communication by care providers to the patients and families experiencing death and dying transitions should be aimed at
   _______________________
   1. Relieving the suffering and distracting from the emotion
   2. Listening and allowing for sharing of feelings
   3. Providing thoughtful guidance and information about expected events

Post-Test
Assessment of Knowledge about Communication during Death and Dying Transitions
Circle the appropriate answer(s)
Post answer to the following questions on group discussion forum, no later than the Wednesday following Monday’s class.
Respond to at least 2 other student postings.

1) Describe what you felt was the most important thing you learned about communication with patients and families during Death and Dying Transitions?

2) What was the “muddiest point” or the area where you felt most confused or unclear about what you learned?
## Class Participation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Performance Quality (4pts)</th>
<th>(3pts)</th>
<th>(2pts)</th>
<th>(1pt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration of course readings into class participation</td>
<td>Frequently cites from readings and uses assigned materials to support decision making, able to demonstrate connection between content material and activities</td>
<td>Occasionally cites from readings and sometimes uses assigned materials to support decision making, able to demonstrate connection between content material and activities</td>
<td>Rarely cites from readings and rarely uses assigned materials to support decision making, struggles to demonstrate connection between content material and activities</td>
<td>Unable to cite from readings or use assigned materials to support decision making, cannot demonstrate connection between content material and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and interaction in discussions</td>
<td>Frequently willing to participate and responds frequently to questions, voluntarily participates and offers point of view</td>
<td>Often willing to participate and responds occasionally to questions, Occasionally volunteers own point of view</td>
<td>Rarely willing to participate or able to respond to questions, rarely volunteers own point of view</td>
<td>Never willing to participate or able to respond to questions, does not volunteer own point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and interaction in learning activities</td>
<td>Willingly participates, acts appropriately during role play activities, responds frequently to questions, volunteers point of view, supports others in classroom activities</td>
<td>Participates, acts appropriately during role play activities, responds occasionally to questions, occasionally volunteers point of view, supports others in classroom activities</td>
<td>Rarely participates, occasionally acts inappropriately during role play activities, rarely responds to questions or offers own point of view, does not always behave in a supportive manner towards others in classroom activities</td>
<td>Never participates, behaves inappropriately during role play activities, does not respond to questions or offer own point of view, is unsupportive of others in classroom activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstration of caring and professional attitude and demeanor</td>
<td>Demonstrates professional commitment by thoroughly preparing for class, demonstrates caring by open communication, respect for fellow learners opinions and perspectives, active listening, and support for fellow learners experience</td>
<td>Demonstrates professional commitment by preparing for class, demonstrates caring by participating respectfully in classroom activities, respect for fellow learners opinions and perspectives and active listening.</td>
<td>Demonstrates lack of professional commitment by arriving minimally prepared for class, does not always demonstrate caring by intermittent participation and lack of respect during activities for fellow learners opinions and perspectives, not actively listening.</td>
<td>Demonstrates lack of professional commitment by arriving unprepared for class, demonstrates lack of caring by not participating in activities or behaving in a respectful manner to fellow learners.</td>
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## Course Evaluation

Please Complete this Online Course Evaluation and return to faculty no later than Wednesday following Monday’s class

1) What was the most important thing you learned in this class?

2) Were the readings and pre-class activities helpful in understanding and giving you a basis for understanding the topic?

3) Did the learning activities help you meet the class objectives? If yes, how? If no, how might you have better met the objectives?
# Class Syllabus: Caring Communication at End of Life

## Class Description:
Exploration of communication with patients and families during death and dying transitions.

## Requirements:
Participation in post clinical conference is mandatory. If you are unable to attend class due to illness or unavoidable circumstance please notify faculty prior to missing class. You will be required to make up any class time and activities missed.

## Faculty Contact Information:
Debbie Green RN, BSN, CCRN  
Office: 208-888-8888  
Email: [greedebo@isu.edu](mailto:greedebo@isu.edu) (preferred method)

If at any time you need clarification regarding an assignment or class expectations please feel free to email.

## Textbooks & Tools:

Internet access to online class discussion forum, campus health science library (online), and websites.

## Class Outcomes:
1. Students will analyze their own feelings, attitudes, expectations, values, surrounding death and dying, including cultural and spiritual influences.
2. Students will collaboratively create patient care goals for patients and families experiencing end of life transitions

## Evaluation:
See accompanying participation rubric and post-test

## Class Expectations & Policies:

### Participation & Assignments:
All students are expected to complete pre-class assignments and to participate in class activities and discussions. Assignments are due on the date listed on the assignment.

### Behavior:
Students will demonstrate respect for faculty and fellow students and behavior that is disruptive to a positive learning environment will not be tolerated. Discussions in this class will involve sharing of personal information and private healthcare information including details of clinical experiences. It is expected that all students respect and maintain the privacy of their peers and the patients and families with whom they work. Any deviation from this will be grounds for corrective action up to and including expulsion from the class.
References


