Answer Guidance

# Chapter 16: Communication and interpersonal skills in challenging circumstances

## Activity answer guidance

### Activity 16.1

Make a list of situations that you find challenging in nursing. Why do these situations feel challenging? How many of these situations involve communication with other people?

#### Answer guidance:

*Challenging situations often arise when we feel poorly equipped to deliver nursing care. Sometimes in nursing, it can be difficult to know what to say or what to do, and this can be particularly challenging for us. As we develop our skills and knowledge and gain more experience and confidence, we begin to feel better equipped to deal with the personal challenges associated with providing nursing care.*

### Activity 16.2

What barriers are there in our communication with each other? Consider circumstances when you feel you have been misunderstood or when you have misunderstood someone. Why did this happen?

#### Answer guidance:

*Common barriers in our communication with each other include:*

 *Language (not being able to understand another person because they speak (and perhaps can only speak) a different language.*

 *Culture (different cultures are likely to have different expectations about social interaction and conduct).*

 *Consciousness (people who have a fluctuating level of consciousness, or who are unresponsive, pose considerable communication challenges for the nurse).*

 *Sensory Impairments (such as people who are deaf, blind, or cannot speak).*

 *Mental Health Problems*

### Activity 16.3

How might you overcome linguistic barriers in communicating with others?

#### Answer guidance:

*It is important to ensure that information is readily available to all patients and service users. Key written information should be available in different formats (in writing, braille, and so forth) and in all common languages and interpreters should be accessible to explain healthcare interventions.*

### Activity 16.4

Consider, for example, the difference between “Aural” and “Oral” Care. How might this lead to confusion?

#### Answer guidance:

*Aural refers to hearing or relating to the ear while oral refers to the mouth or that which is spoken rather than written. One of the key problems here is that the terms sound very alike. While the term oral is in common usage, aural is not commonly used.*

## Case study answer guidance

### Case study 16.1: Professor Stephen Hawking

For many years, Professor Stephen Hawking suffered from Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS; one of the most common types of motor neuron disease), the symptoms of which include an atrophying of muscles and difficulty with swallowing, breathing, and speaking (dysarthria). Professor Hawking used his cheek muscles to control a device that allowed him to communicate one word per minute. However, this did not prevent him from writing books (such as The Grand Design [with Mlodinow, 2010]) and contributing to/presenting television programs. His ability to receive and understand messages from other people and his environment was not impaired.

What challenges do you foresee that nurses may have in communicating with a person diagnosed with motor neurone disease?

#### Answer guidance:

*The Motor Neurone Disease Association (MDNA) reminds us that not everyone with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) will experience problems with their speech, but for some people, the muscles in the mouth, throat, and chest can be affected. This can affect their ability to communicate and be understood. The person may experience weakness in the muscles of the tongue and lips, making it difficult to speak clearly. There may be particular difficulty with sounds such as consonants “p,” “b,” “t,” “d,” “k,” “g” and weakness of the soft palate, allowing air to leak out of the nose with the voice having a subsequent nasal quality. The vocal cords may be weakened, which can make the voice sound hoarse, low pitched, and monotonous speech become slow, slurred, and indistinct, making it difficult to produce intelligible speech. There may also be problems with muscles in the chest, which can affect breathing so that the voice becomes soft and faint (MDNA 2013).*