

Forms of Communication

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FORMS OF COMMUNICATION is the first part of the series of articles written by Miss Daisy Marion Hamesh Das for this Journal. Miss Das is a well established writer and the author of *SPACE AS I SEE IT* (1969), *Medico-legal Aspects of Nursing* (1973) and *Jurisprudence for Nurses* (1974).

In this introductory article, she has given a comprehensive description of the various forms in which communication takes place. In the next instalment she will cover more details on the mechanisms of communication, the various causes of its breakdown and the factors associated with barriers to effective communication. In the final article, she will deal with communication skills and provide hints for developing more fruitful communication. —Ed.

Though communication appears to be a very simple process of human life it is really not that simple. The process is rather complicated because all of us face certain amount of difficulties when we deal with people in our day-to-day life. If we attempt to explore the basis of these difficulties we find that in most cases improper communication is at the root. Communication is a complex integral part of human interaction. Skills of communication is a vast subject of study. Unless people understand what one is trying to communicate, their response will not be effective. As in ordinary life, in the part of nursing too, effective communication plays an important part.

The word *communication* has been defined in the Webster's Dictionary as "the act, behaviour or action of imparting or transmitting...interchange of thoughts or opinions, a process by which meanings are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols (as language signs or gestures)". It also means to share, to give to others, to interchange thoughts, opinions and ideas. Communication is a joint process between the speaker and the listener. It is a basic management skill and an act of developing understanding. It is defined as an act or behaviour because it involves physical and mental activity on the part of the sender as well as the receiver of the message. It is considered as a process because meanings are exchanged through it. Since one participates in it, it is also an experience. It is a mutual interaction which influences and counter-influences when two individuals observe each other in order to convey their thoughts, feelings and attitudes. It may be a meaningful or frustrating experience. It is the instrument that initiates and induces change when individuals speak and act and is as such a creative process. In short, it is an *oscillating* reciprocal process of sharing and transmitting thoughts, opinions and feelings. It involves a source (sender), a recipient (receiver), the message (meaning) and the clear reception (understanding and acceptance of message).

Types of Communication

Physiological Communication. Our body has many

parts which depend on one another for effective functioning. The human brain continuously receives messages, stores and processes them and then adopts its own programme or pattern of reactions to further convey the message. Each message received by the brain is capable of having some influence on both the store of knowledge in the brain and the programme for handling the future messages. This process goes on from the beginning of life. By the time an individual becomes an adult, he is likely to have a fairly mixed store of information and a complex programme for handling and reacting to new messages.

Psychic Communication. Psychic communication is extra-sensory perception. Telepathy and thought transference are some of the examples of psychic communication. There is a direct knowledge or awareness of something without conscious attention or reasoning.

Non verbal Communication. This type of communication refers to the transmission of messages without the use of words. In certain cases words fail or are not required, the gestures, looks, facial expressions, body movements and smiles act as the tools of communication though inadequate. Non verbal communication also includes sounds such as those associated with crying, groaning and screaming. Sometimes meanings are transmitted non verbally by touch or smell or by signs and symbols, pictures, music, dance and dramas. It takes place in a face-to-face encounter. As a matter of fact, non verbal communication adds meaning to that which is said. To emphasize and illustrate comments, gestures are used.

The language of gesture is older than speech. Expressions of sorrow, anger, affection, impatience, desire and happiness are communicated through gestures and looks. With the development of language the gestures have not been abandoned. They still underline and emphasize meaning of what is remarked. Parkinson observed that gestures are used more by women than men...more by the illiterate than the educated, more by the young than the old. Similarly our looks indi-

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