

Honing Your Observation Skills



Developing Observation Skills

- Making observations means gathering information through four of our senses:
 - Vision
 - Hearing
 - Smell
 - Touch

Observation Skills

- Many people take observation skills for granted
- They can be sharpened into a powerful tool
- Takes time and practice
- Requires the ability to focus, an appreciation of the importance of accuracy, and an understanding of what to communicate

Observations

- A good observer:
 - Notices a person's appearance
 - Notices body language
 - Listens closely to the person's words or vocalizations
 - Is alert to changes in behavior or mood

Honing Your Skills

- One important part is the ability to focus carefully on the resident.
 - Caregivers are not immune from life's distractions
 - It may be difficult to leave your personal concerns at home
 - Thinking about personal issues can distract from focusing on the resident
 - Try to visualize the outside world as a separate space
 - Conversing with the residents is a great way to change your focus

Making a Difference by Using Your Skills

- When you know the resident, you are then able to see changes that when communicated may lead to earlier intervention
 - Often older adults do not have typical presentations of illness
 - A behavior change may indicate an infection
 - A behavior change may indicate pain
 - Breathing patterns, facial expressions, and body language are subtle signs that a resident is in pain
 - Subtle changes in behavior are extremely important because it could indicate deteriorating health

How To Be a Better Observer

- Trust your instincts
- Communicate with team members
- Share your observations

A Barrier to Good Observations

- Time is one of the biggest barriers
 - A resident can sense when you are rushed
 - The resident may not be comfortable sharing verbally
 - Sometimes what the resident says or how they say it is equally important

Types of Observations

- Objective Observations
 - Any observations that are measureable
- Subjective Observations
 - Involves reporting how the resident is feeling. These observations are not measureable

Objective Observations

- Do not take personal beliefs of the resident or caregiver into consideration
- They involve only reporting measurable information such as:
 - Vital signs
 - Level of consciousness or alertness
 - Height and weight
 - Fluid intake and output
 - Bowel elimination
 - Appetite and food intake
 - Skin color and condition
 - Rang of motion
 - Speech patterns

Subjective Observations

- Reporting residents complaints can provide hints at the underlining cause of an illness
- It is important to report exactly what the resident says
- Examples include:
 - “I have a headache”
 - “I feel nauseous”

Observation Tips

- When making observations, the ability to notice details and small changes is essential
- The best and most accurate observations will not help the resident if you do not communicate them to the correct person
- Remember an important aspect is to advocate for the resident

Summary

- Always remember to report what you sense accurately
- When you notice a change, even if it seems insignificant, it is important to report it to the nurse or designated member of the team in a timely manner
- By making careful observations using all of your senses, you can help identify health problems early on and make sure the residents get the care they require

Reference

Cengage Learning. (2019). Honing your observation skills. *Nursing Assistant Monthly*, 24(3), 1-4.



Tuscarawas County

Truman House

716 Commercial Ave. SW
New Philadelphia, Ohio

Stark County

4912 Higbee Avenue NW, Suite 100
Canton, Ohio 44615

Columbiana County

2341 E. State Street, Unit B
Salem, Ohio 44460

Carroll County

704 Canton Rd. NE, Suite A
Carrollton, Ohio 44615

Coshocton County

230 S. 4th Street
Coshocton, Ohio 43812

WWW.MYHOSPICE.ORG

1-800-947-7284