

Supporting Patients Responsive Behaviours



"We don't get to decide if we have challenging patients in our care, but we can certainly decide how we choose to respond to them"
- Unknown

TRACKING BEHAVIOURS:

- **Antecedent:**

What happened before?

- **Behaviour**

What happened during?
(Behaviours, etc.)

- **Consequences**

What happened after?

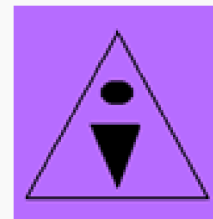
Note: Consequences can be both positive and negative

- **Observations**

Any additional things to note? (Staff involved, environment, time of day, approaches, etc.)

When supporting patients with challenging behaviours linked to cognitive impairment, it's vital to grasp their unique needs and emotions.

Many may experience feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability due to unfamiliar surroundings, a loss of independence, confusion, a history of trauma, and the perceived power imbalance between the healthcare provider and the patient. All of these factors can lead to fear, anxiety, and challenging (responsive) behaviours.



Here are some practical tips for engaging with patients exhibiting responsive behaviours:

1. Use Clear and Simple Language: Speak slowly and in straightforward terms. Avoid jargon or complex medical terminology. Be empathetic and give the patient time to respond.

2. Consider Timed Care: Schedule care at times that work best for the patient. This may be when they are less confused, not hungry, or don't urgently need to use the bathroom. If it is not a good time for the patient or they are resisting care or are combative, don't force it. Come back at a different/better time.

3. Offer Choices: When possible, provide options to empower the patient. For example, you can say, "Hello, my name is _____. I'm here to complete your vitals and check your glucose levels. Would you like me to start with testing your glucose levels or taking your blood pressure?"

Consult the "Learn About Me" tool (Attached to the BCA form) available on the intranet under "Clinical Tools," Workplace Violence.

4 FUNCTIONS OF BEHAVIOUR:

The four functions of behaviour are often categorized as follows:

1. Social Attention/Interaction:

Seeking attention or social interaction from others. This behaviour may be a way for patients to connect with those around them, establish relationships, or fulfill a need for social engagement.

2. Escape/Avoidance:

Trying to remove oneself from a situation or avoid a task or demand. Patients may engage in behaviours aimed at escaping or avoiding certain responsibilities or activities that they find challenging or unpleasant.

3. Tangible Rewards/Access:

Behaving in a certain way to gain access to specific items, activities, or privileges. Patients may display behaviour with the intention of obtaining tangible rewards or gaining access to something they desire.

4. Self-Stimulation/Sensory

Comfort: Engaging in behaviours that provide self-stimulation or sensory comfort. This could include repetitive movements, such as tapping or rocking, that help individuals regulate their sensory experiences or cope with stress.

4. Verbally Explain Procedures: Before performing any medical procedures, take the time to explain each step to the patient verbally. This not only helps them understand what's about to happen but also ensures their informed consent. For instance, you can say, "_____, I'm going to test your blood sugar levels. First, I'll gently hold your finger... Now, I'm going to use this device for a small prick... Etc." Talking to them through the process can alleviate anxiety and demonstrate respect for their autonomy.

5. Recognize Behavioural Communication: Understand that ALL behaviour is a form of communication. Their actions are their way of expressing needs, discomfort, or confusion. Try to determine what their specific need or frustration is contributing to their behaviour and endeavour to address that need or minimize that frustration.

6. Track Behaviours: Keeping a record of their behaviours is crucial for understanding the function behind these actions. Only when we comprehend the purpose of the behaviour can we implement appropriate interventions to address their specific needs effectively.

Caring for patients exhibiting responsive behaviours can be demanding, necessitating additional time and effort for you to address their underlying needs and help them understand the plan for care. Dealing with continual resistance or combative behaviour can also take a toll on your mental and physical well-being.

Recognizing when to step back, take a brief pause for reflection, and seek support from colleagues is crucial. Implementing some of the strategies below can help to redirect and de-escalate behaviours, ultimately enhancing patient cooperation, nurturing a more supportive environment for patients with cognitive impairments, and diminishing staff frustration and risk of injury.

References:

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